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Lisa McGirr: Suburban Warriors

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Orange County, 1960. Inset: Southern California region.

INTRODUCTION

ON MARCH 4, 1964, Estrid Kielsmeier, a mother of two young children and the wife of an accountant, rose bright and early at her home on Janet Lane in one of the newer suburban developments of Garden Grove, California. She made her way into the kitchen to set out coffee, putting dozens of cups on the table. Mrs. Kielsmeier was expecting visitors. But this was not to be an ordinary suburban coffee klatch. Next to the coffee, she placed blank nominating petitions to qualify Barry Goldwater as a candidate for president in her state's Republican primary. Starting at six o'clock, the first neighbors arrived to sign the petitions. Throughout the morning they came alone, as families, and in small groups. Goldwater was their candidate.

On this spring day, Kielsmeier and thousands of grassroots conservatives worked feverishly in a show of support for their standard-bearer. They had set up "Operation Q" for the March 4 opening, in the words of one commentator, "as meticulously drilled and planned as an expeditionary force waiting for D-Day."¹ Some, like Kielsmeier, set up "coffees." Others pounded the pavement. Doorbells rang throughout Southern California as volunteer cadres gathered signatures. In a remarkable organizational feat, before noon on the first day of their drive, these volunteers had gathered over 36,000 names, about three times as many as were needed to qualify their candidate for the ballot. Yet despite their having accomplished their goal, the torrent of support for Barry Goldwater continued, and by March 6, they had gathered another 50,000 names.²

Kielsmeier's effort on behalf of Goldwater that early spring morning was just one step in her deepening conservative activism—an activism spurred by her strong conviction that the world's first "Christian Republic" was in danger. America was,

in her eyes, on a course of political, economic, and moral decline; a course steered by the nation's liberals. To counter the tide, Kielsmeier, and many men and women like her, sought to create, as she put it, a "mini-revolution . . . in the true sense of the word . . . a revolving back . . . to the foundations of the country."³ It was a revolution quite different from those we usually associate with the 1960s.

Indeed, Kielsmeier and "suburban warriors" like her built a vibrant and remarkable political mobilization during the 1960s, and it is their history that this book seeks to chronicle. It was in suburbs such as Garden Grove, Orange County (the place Kielsmeier called home), in conjunction with the backing of regional entrepreneurs, that small groups of middle-class men and women met in their new tract homes, seeking to turn the tide of liberal dominance.⁴ Recruiting the like-minded, they organized study groups, opened "Freedom Forum" bookstores, filled the rolls of the John Birch Society, entered school board races, and worked within the Republican Party, all in an urgent struggle to safeguard their particular vision of freedom and the American heritage. In doing so, they became the ground forces of a conservative revival—one that transformed conservatism from a marginal force preoccupied with communism in the early 1960s into a viable electoral contender by the decade's end.

This book is a history of the conservative movement, using Orange County as the lens through which to explore the social base and ideological waters of one of the most profound transformations of twentieth-century U.S. politics. Orange County, as contemporary newspaper commentators never tired of emphasizing, was a real center and symbol of American conservatism in the 1960s.⁵ Its conservative movement was the nucleus of a broader conservative matrix evolving in the Sunbelt and the West that eventually propelled assertive and unapologetic conservatives to national prominence.⁶ Political analyst Kevin Phillips, noting the national significance of the conservative political traditions of Southern California suburbanites, observed as early as 1969 that "perhaps no other political impetus in the

nation is so important as the middle-class upheaval of the Sun country, and Southern California in particular.”⁷ The southland’s size and affluence has made it an important source of money and votes for conservative candidates and organizations, enabling it to help shape the political direction of the nation. Southland conservatives led the way in making an emerging Republican majority. Together with their conservative brethren elsewhere in the South and the West, they recast the party of Lincoln from the moderate Republicanism of the eastern Wall Street establishment into a southern and western mold of a far more conservative bent.⁸

These conservative activists and the movement they forged are essential to understanding the rightward shift in American politics since the 1960s. Far outside the boundaries of respectable politics in the early 1960s, the Right expanded its influence on the national scene in the late 1960s and 1970s and vaulted to national power with the Reagan landslide of 1980. Since that time, conservatives in Washington have transformed the relationship between federal and state power, limited the regulatory capacity of the central state, and altered the fundamental structure of the New Deal welfare state. Conservatives’ successes, to be sure, were due in no small part to liberalism’s foundering on the shoals of race, economic discontent, and its own internal contradictions. But just as significantly, conservatives’ ability to build a powerful movement enabled them to pick up the pieces and profit politically from liberal failures.

This book, then, is not only about the making of the modern American Right but also about the forging of the late twentieth-century United States. People like Kielsmeier made history in the conservative revival, in effect recasting politics in ways comparable only to the upheavals of the New Deal. When their standard-bearer claimed the presidency in 1980, the long years of organizing in obscurity, the times when the conservative movement was ridiculed and marginalized seemed to have come to an end. “It was so exciting,” one activist recalled. “People finally understood what we’re about.”⁹ From their inauspicious beginnings in the early 1960s, these conservatives had, by 1980, helped to

transform the political landscape of America. For better or for worse, these other radicals of the 1960s have had lasting influence on American politics in the late twentieth century.

These “kitchen-table” activists have fundamentally shaped the course of American politics, and yet, until now, they have lived in obscurity. They have done so in part because their mobilization has been overshadowed by the more flamboyant Left and its movement culture. Images of Martin Luther King proclaiming “Let freedom ring” on the Washington Mall, students burning draft cards at federal induction centers, and flower children gathering in Haight-Ashbury for the “summer of love” filled American television screens in the 1960s. The left-wing and liberal movements of the period dominated the airwaves and newspapers; indeed, the sixties were the heyday of liberal social change. African-Americans in the South built the most successful social movement of the twentieth century. Inspired by their example and a deepening rights consciousness, white student radicals, counterculturalists, and feminists altered the political and cultural fabric of the nation.¹⁰ But at the same time, buffered and buffeted by these progressive gains, conservative intellectuals, politicians, and pastors—together with thousands of grassroots activists—set in place the ideas, strategies, and politics that would pave their road to national power.

It is not only because of liberalism’s strength during this stormy decade that this movement has remained largely uncharted. Rather, the popular images of the 1960s grassroots Right as a band of emotional, irrational “kooks” contributed to their obscurity. Orange County’s vibrant conservative movement, for example, earned the county the reputation, according to a *Fortune* magazine article in 1968, as America’s “nut country.”¹¹ Such pejorative labels resulted in part from liberal disdain for the unappealingly exclusionary aspects of conservative politics, but they were also given substance by the Right’s apocalyptic and conspiratorial rhetoric. Robert Welch, the leader of the John Birch Society, for example, made the preposterous suggestion that Dwight D. Eisenhower was a “crypto-Communist”

whose actions were driven by “Communist bosses who count on him merely for the execution of their planning,” and Congressman James B. Utt of Orange County made national news in 1963 with his suggestions that “a large contingent of barefooted Africans” might be training in Georgia for what he hinted could be part of a United Nations military exercise to take over the United States.¹² Such outlandish statements by right-wing politicians and leaders were easy to lampoon and gave the popular press reason to dismiss the mobilization as “fanatical” and “extremist” without further examination. The kitchen-table activists and their motivations remained unchronicled.

Contemporary scholars amplified the tendencies of the popular press. In the wake of McCarthyism and the rise of right-wing groups in the early 1960s, Daniel Bell, Richard Hofstadter, and Seymour Martin Lipset turned their attention to explaining the roots of popular support for right-wing politics. Sharing a vision of the United States as fundamentally shaped by the liberal pluralism they so strongly sought to uphold, they viewed right-wing activists as motivated less by any coherent set of ideas or rational politics than by psychological distress. Bell and Lipset, in particular, argued that status anxieties of both an older, dispossessed middle class and an upwardly mobile group of white ethnics explained support for the Right. Hofstadter, in turn, borrowing from clinical psychology, suggested that a sense of “persecution” and a “paranoid style” characterized the Right’s adherents. In effect, these influential scholars cast the Right as a marginal, embattled remnant fighting a losing battle against the inexorable forces of progress.¹³ The Right, they concluded, was prone to episodic outbursts similar to those of other “extremist” movements in American history that ran counter to the fundamental direction of change in American life—the tireless forward march of American liberalism.¹⁴ While they correctly argued for paying attention to the ordinary people who populated the ranks of the Right, their excessively psychological interpretation distorted our understanding of American conservatism.

This book’s exploration of the world of Orange County activists and the movement they built, however, produces a picture

of the Right that is at odds with both the contemporary media images and the explanations of conservatism put forth by the consensus-school scholars.¹⁵ While a segment of the Right appealed to traditional ideas, embraced a fundamentalist religious worldview and apocalyptic strands of thought, challenging some of the basic assumptions of modernism, these ideas took hold among a highly educated and thoroughly modern group of men and women. Conservatives in Orange County enjoyed the fruits of worldly success, often worked in high-tech industries, shared in the burgeoning consumer culture, and participated in the bureaucratized world of post-World War II America.¹⁶ Their mobilization, then, was not a rural “remnant” of the displaced and maladapted but a gathering around principles that were found to be relevant in the most modern of communities. Post-World War II American conservatism thus explodes any easy dichotomies between tradition and modernity. Indeed, an exploration of this movement highlights the dual nature of modern American conservatism: its strange mixture of traditionalism and modernity, a combination that suggests the adaptability, resilience, and, thus perhaps, intractability of the Right in American life.

The question of how conservative political ideology, often considered an antimodern worldview, attracted a large number of people in the most technologically advanced and economically vibrant of American locales is one of the central puzzles this book tries to solve. The vibrant conservative milieu in which these activists flourished, of course, owed its strength, in part, to Orange County’s established cultural patterns and traditions. But its real rise was linked to the region’s breathtaking transformation after World War II. Propelled by the Cold War military-industrial complex, Southern California’s ways of life and work changed radically, disposing many of its inhabitants to embrace a radicalized form of politics. The largely white-collar, educated, and often highly skilled women and men who embraced right-wing politics saw their own lives and the flowering communities where they made their homes as tributes to the possibilities of individual entrepreneurial success. Regional business leaders, moreover, promulgated a vigorous libertarianism that helped to

lead Orange County citizens to an unabashed celebration of the free market. The people who came to Orange County were often steeped in nationalism, moralism, and piety that were part of the warp and woof of the communities from which they hailed. While, in other settings, this conservatism had been tempered by an earlier link to the political traditions of the New Deal, here it took on different meanings, a transformation sharpened by Orange Countians' new affluence and discomfort with the growing liberalism in state and national politics in the 1960s. Compounding the attraction of the Right was the sense of coherence, community, and commitment that conservative churches and right-wing organizations provided—a sense otherwise absent from the larger world of Orange County. For these middle-class men and women, Western libertarianism, combined with a theoretically incompatible social and cultural conservatism, came to make “common sense.”¹⁷

The pejorative labels that served in the past to dismiss this movement have led me to be cautious in choosing terminology. The slipperiness of these older labels is evinced by their lack of durability. Whereas in 1965 William F. Buckley, Jr., was touted by *Life* magazine as “the enfant terrible of the Far Right” and Barry Goldwater was often labeled a dangerous extremist by his contemporaries, more recently these individuals have been regarded as representatives of respectable conservatism, despite the fact that their politics did not change significantly during the past decades.¹⁸ This not only shows how much the political spectrum has shifted but also complicates the question of how to talk about grassroots conservatives of the 1960s. I have chosen not to use the terms “ultraconservatism,” “Radical Right,” or “Far Right” when referring to the movement. I have done so first because these terms are fraught with psychological overtones and dismissive connotations. Second, they do not accurately reflect the politics and ideas of the conservative movement as a whole. Instead, they brand the entire movement with a dismissive label that may, at most, be said to fit a small segment of it. The “Radical Right” or “extreme Right” label might be usefully applied to that segment of the Right that engaged in con-

spiratorial thinking—organizations, for example, like the John Birch Society. Yet, even here, such terminology is problematic. Even the most militant John Birchers in Orange County sought to work through constitutional channels to forward their goals.¹⁹ Additionally, many conservatives who joined such conspiratorial organizations as the John Birch Society did not share the paranoid theories of their leader. Rather, they saw the society as the only organized voice for the right wing. More important, conservatives who embraced conspiratorial thinking shared a sufficient set of complaints, assumptions, and common enemies that united them with their more “respectable” cohorts in one movement. They swam in the same ideological waters as the broader conservative movement as a whole and, above all, participated in building one mobilization out of their common grievances against American liberalism. For definitional precision, then, the terms “Far Right” and “Radical Right” should be limited to white supremacist, paramilitary, and fascist fringe groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the Minute Men, groups that stepped outside of democratic political processes to achieve their goals. The Minute Men did have a small organized presence in Southern California in the 1960s, but they remained marginal.²⁰

I use the terms “conservatism” and “the Right” interchangeably to characterize the movement under investigation here, but these terms still require definition. The Right, after all, was composed of distinct groups whose priorities, worldviews, and political strategies differed. Despite important internal divisions, however, conservatives in the 1960s shared a number of concerns. First, they were united in their opposition to liberal “collectivism”—the growing tendency of the state to organize social and economic life in the name of the public welfare and the social good. Libertarians sought to limit the intrusiveness of the nation-state in economic matters (although their antistatism stopped at the door of a strong-armed defense), and normative conservatives opposed what they perceived to be a decline in religiosity, morality, individual responsibility, and family authority—a decline, they argued, that went hand in hand with the

growth of centralized federal power. In Orange County, both groups championed virulent anticommunism, celebrated laissez-faire capitalism, evoked staunch nationalism, and supported the use of the state to uphold law and order. America, they believed, had an organic, benevolent order that would function well if not for tampering by liberal elites.²¹

The triumph of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and the new respectability of conservative ideas in national discourse thereafter brought a renewal of interest in the origins of the conservative movement. Indeed, historical and sociological studies on the post-World War II American Right have proliferated in recent years.²² Historians have charted the conservative intellectual movement, traced the odyssey of the Right in the Republican Party, offered biographical treatments of national conservative leaders, and outlined the history of organizations such as the Young Americans for Freedom.²³ Sociologists have argued for the importance of understanding the Right as a social movement, taking into account its ideas and its coalition building.²⁴ These scholars and political observers have identified important factors that contributed to the rise of the Right.²⁵ Yet these studies have focused exclusively on the national level, leaving unexamined and unexplained the dynamic social base that propelled the movement and gave it its endurance and strength.²⁶ We still lack a deep understanding of the women and men who built the movement and of the communities from which they sprang.²⁷

The few studies that have explored single settings have focused on grievances and discontent among lower-middle-class, urban, eastern ethnics: the “Reagan Democrats,” once considered locked into the New Deal coalition, whose shifting allegiances helped pave the road to national power for the Right.²⁸ Although they were undeniably important, such disgruntled Democrats were not the driving force of the conservative movement. The issues of race and welfare indeed alienated swing voters and, as this study confirms, were important motivators at all levels, but the conservative grassroots mobilization predated the

height of urban violence and “white backlash” and had its ideological roots in a more thoroughgoing, anti-egalitarian, conservative worldview.

This book, then, advances a new perspective on the conservative insurgency of the recent past. It touches on all the existing narratives that have contributed to our understanding of the rise of the American Right, but it has a central dynamic that lies outside of them. Telling the story of Orange County’s “suburban warriors” requires more attention to social forces, to regionalism, to enduring political traditions outside the liberal consensus, and to the political movements that ordinary men and women at times create.²⁹ I suggest that it is only within the context of the Cold War; postwar demographic transformation; the dynamics of economic, cultural, and political change; and their cumulative impact on the values and beliefs of ordinary people that we can uncover the process by which the modern American Right was made. This perspective moves beyond the realm of pure politics to explore the social forces that created political opportunities for the Right. It seeks to illuminate the world of the men and women who rejected the liberal vision and instead championed individual economic freedom and a staunch social conservatism.

In short, then, this book explores the Right as a social movement, distinguishing the distinct but intersecting levels at which right-wing mobilization occurred.³⁰ Locally, mobilization involved the grassroots leaders and rank-and-file men and women, the broader ideological waters in which they swam, as well as regional business elites who offered resources and institutional support. At the national level, it involved the formation of an intellectual leadership that sought to give cohesion to the ideas underpinning the movement, as well as a political leadership that offered direction to channel conservative sentiment.

While this book addresses the conservative movement at the state and national levels, it is primarily a local study. A thick description of right-wing politics in one locale, I believe, best reveals the process of conservative mobilization, the Right’s means and mechanisms of recruitment, and the movement’s evo-

lution. It allows me to describe the interplay between local and national political movements. Such a perspective, moreover, permits a rich understanding of the complex interaction between individuals and their social milieu, as well as the broader institutions and structural forces that informed their world. It provides a microscopic view of processes that are often left to the realm of abstraction: the sources of right-wing support, the creation of the Sunbelt, suburbanization, and white backlash. Such a study can best reveal the social setting, the economic forces, and the impulses, prejudices, and ideas that nourished popular conservatism in recent American history.

Although this is a local study that helps to explain the rise of a national movement, I make no claims that Orange County was “typical.” Indeed, what makes Orange County worthy of attention was the atypical vibrancy of its conservative movement. But while Orange County differed in the degree and visibility of its mobilization, the socioeconomic, cultural, and political patterns that contributed to conservatism’s success there were symptomatic of the patterns and forces that contributed to its appeal in other Sunbelt and western communities. In California itself, the neighboring counties of Los Angeles and San Diego also provided fertile soil for right-wing growth. In contrast to these areas, however, Orange County politics were not tempered by the presence of influential counterbalancing forces: liberal Jewish Democrats, organized workers, and vocal minorities. Orange County exaggerated trends occurring elsewhere—trends that were harbingers of future national change.

Orange County might best be understood as a prototype: the first functional form of a new conservative milieu that appeared less distinctly elsewhere. While studies remain to be written that would fully describe the details, the most cursory examination of postwar settings in the Sunbelt and the West where conservative cultures have flourished since the 1960s—places like Fort Worth (“Free Enterprise City”) and the northeast suburbs of Dallas, Texas; Scottsdale and Maricopa County, Arizona; Cobb and northern Dekalb Counties, Georgia; the affluent suburbs of Jefferson Parish, Louisiana (towns like Metairie); or

Colorado Springs, Colorado—suggests that they had much in common with Orange County. They have shared an older regional identity that defined itself against northeastern power, a model of growth based on “clean development,” a socially homogeneous group of highly skilled, affluent inhabitants, and, often, the powerful presence of defense and military. Taken together, these large, prosperous communities have had a tremendous influence on the national scene, providing many of the rank-and-file supporters of the libertarian and Christian Right.

In telling the story of the making of the national Right through the lens of Orange County, my study will necessarily emphasize certain features of modern conservatism while downplaying others. As part of the American West, Orange County has had distinctive patterns of development and political and cultural traditions that have propelled a regional ethos and a staunch antistatist libertarianism significant in modern American political history.³¹ The modern West has drawn on a sense of identity rooted in notions of the self-made, individualist frontiersman counterpoised to an older, corrupt East. The themes of local control and of the threat of intrusion by a distant federal center of power have resonated powerfully in a region long dependent on East Coast financiers and federal funds to propel economic growth, an area where federal government bureaucrats have controlled vast amounts of land and resources.

These demands for local control and opposition to federal power (despite the region’s simultaneous embrace of federal funds for internal development) were not unique to the West. They have been at the core of modern conservatism and are central to a distinct southern and western regional identity. Yet the forces underlying these concerns have varied. Racial issues were far more central to the texture and fabric of southern politics and to that region’s conservatism. While Orange County’s southwestern location links it geographically to the South as well as the West, making it a central part of the distinctive regional identity that has come to be known as the Sunbelt, racial issues did not occupy the same prominence in the life, ideas,

and politics of Southern California as they did in the former confederate states in the 1960s. Opposition to government action to bolster the constitutional rights of African-Americans did contribute to the Right's appeal, but it was only one of a host of issues in a broader conservative package. Focusing on western conservatism, then, tells a somewhat different story that cannot be subsumed under the North-South civil rights dichotomy that has so much dominated our narratives of the 1960s.³²

This book traces the transformation of the modern American Right from a marginal force tagged as "extremist" in the early 1960s into the mainstream of national life by the decade's end. This transformation happened in four distinct steps, and the book is organized to highlight the ideas and strategies that characterized each of them. While a core set of assumptions informed all the stages, the package of conservative concerns shifted from a discursive preoccupation with public, political, and international enemies (namely, communism) to enemies within our own communities and families (namely, secular humanists, women's liberationists, and, eventually, homosexuals). Chapter 1 sets the stage for these developments, describing the Southern California that proved such a fertile seedbed for right-wing growth; painting a broad picture of the region's socioeconomic character in 1960, it argues that the process of rapid suburbanization, the Cold War economic boom, regional business entrepreneurs, and a particular group of in-migrants reinforced an already existing conservative ethos. Chapter 2 charts the first and second moments of mobilization: first, the movement's birth in the late 1950s, a time when conservatives, disheartened with their lack of power on the national stage, struck back by founding journals and organizations, creating the core around which the movement would grow. The period of the early 1960s, the second phase of conservative mobilization, was a time of deepening grassroots activism that drew from the ideas, symbols, and targets of McCarthyism. Chapter 2 lays out the history of this mobilization, paying close attention to its beginning, its leaders, its

rank-and-file activists, its strategies, and its movement culture. This second stage led activists to enter the electoral arena in order to take over the local and state Republican Party apparatus—the subject of chapter 3. Here, I explore the intersection of the grassroots Right with a broader national political movement. Culminating with the successful nomination of Barry Goldwater for the presidency in 1964, this “moment” ended when the Right’s extremist and apocalyptic rhetoric almost doomed conservatism as a national movement. Chapter 4 links this phase of conservative mobilization with the next one by analyzing the ideology of the Right, looking at the core strands of right-wing thought—namely, libertarianism and social conservatism—that transcended the different political strategies of its activists. The third stage of conservative mobilization was the birth of a new populist conservatism in the wake of Goldwater’s defeat, the subject of chapter 5. Piloted by Ronald Reagan, who became the new standard-bearer in 1966, conservatives refashioned their discourse, moving away from tirades on socialism and communism, and toward attacks on liberal “permissiveness,” “welfare chiselers,” “criminality,” and “big government.” This shift in emphasis, which coincided with the dramatic events of the decade so familiar to us, produced the Right’s first significant triumph: the election of Ronald Reagan to the governorship of California in 1966. The fourth and final stage, the rise of new social issues and the resurgence of evangelical Christianity in the late 1960s and early 1970s, is charted in chapter 6. Here, the book explores the decline of older organizations on the Right that had been important early in the decade and the shifting lines of battle driven by concerns over sexual liberation, liberalized abortion laws, and the women’s movement. Along with these new initiatives, large-scale and growing evangelical churches in the region brought conservative social concerns to new prominence. The confluence of a middle-class economic backlash over taxes and state spending with Christian conservative hostility toward “Big Brother” stoked a fiery brew that would nourish conservative fortunes nationally. The book ends

by following the trajectory of a group of core conservative activists into the late twentieth century, highlighting the evolution of the movement since the 1960s.

This study examines how a group of people in one county of the nation responded to the social, economic, and cultural changes of the 1960s—a time when national leaders foresaw a major expansion of federal functions to improve the lives of citizens; a time when personal freedoms vastly expanded, when racial hierarchies came tumbling down, and when gender relations were fundamentally reworked. In chronicling the meaning of these changes for the women and men of Garden Grove, Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Newport Beach, and, in particular, the way these people organized to assert the dominance of their beliefs and values in politics, this book provides a case study of how the New Right was made. But it is also my hope that this study of how the men and women in Orange County came to act collectively in politics in the 1960s will further our understanding of the deep, tenacious roots of popular conservatism in twentieth-century America. The conservative movement in Orange County, after all, did not emerge *sui generis* in the 1960s. It formed but one stage in a much longer history of the contest between conservatives and progressives for public power in American life in the twentieth century. Conservatives in the 1960s drew from an older font of ideas. Indeed, until the New Deal, conservative ideas had occupied a central, if not dominant, place in American culture and national life. In conservatives' eyes, then, the period from 1933 to 1980 was a trying time of displacement, marginalization, and struggle. It was a time when they had to adjust to their new position as simultaneous insiders and outsiders to the realms of power. Eventually, as this book demonstrates, their posture as outsiders enabled them to build a self-conscious movement to develop a critique of liberal elites. The world of the New Deal state, thus, first marginalized, then reshuffled, and eventually reinvigorated American conservatism. By the 1960s, conservatives had organized a cohesive movement with institutions, networks, and a broad grassroots following.

This movement, combined with growing opportunities, eventually enabled conservatives to obtain a central position in the halls of national power once more.

In the largest sense, then, this book probes the shifting nature of twentieth-century American conservatism. When, where, and how have conservative political cultures been generated? To what extent has a self-conscious conservative movement advanced and defined itself in reaction to social change? And, most of all, how do we explain the staying power of the Right in American life? In the wake of conservative upheavals—from the fundamentalist mobilizations of the 1920s and the Red-baiting crusades of the 1950s to the Goldwater movement in the 1960s—liberal commentators argued that the Right was in disarray and retreat. With the spread of national liberal culture, education, and modernization to the rural areas and small towns that had once formed the heartland of conservative mobilizations, so the argument went, the Right would become increasingly marginalized. But conservative forces have instead flourished, and they have done so most recently in areas considered least conducive to them: modern suburban regions. They have been able to do so because, in Orange County and elsewhere, conservatives have meshed preservationism with adaptation. While embracing ideas often thought of as incompatible with modernity—in particular a rejection of secularism, egalitarianism, liberal relativism, and the tendency toward a centralized state—conservatives have conceived of themselves, in many ways, as a modern force. Just as importantly, they have accommodated aspects of American pluralism and jettisoned older unpalatable ideas (of anti-Semitism, biological racism, and anti-Catholicism, for example) in the face of new circumstances. At the same time, however, they have carried forward a core set of older assumptions about the nation, God's place within it, law and order, and limited government precepts that resonated with the new circumstances of life of many post-World War II middle- and lower-middle-class (especially white) Americans—Catholics and Protestants alike—particularly in the South and the West. They have addressed real dilemmas that faced Ameri-

cans in the post–World War II period: concerns about the erosion of local autonomy, of community, of individualism, and a disparagement of tradition in a familiar language. They have done so, moreover, in a way that seemed to safeguard a way of life and a set of power relations its adherents wished to preserve. Conservatism has been both a reactive and a proactive force, a mixture that helps explain its strength and endurance.